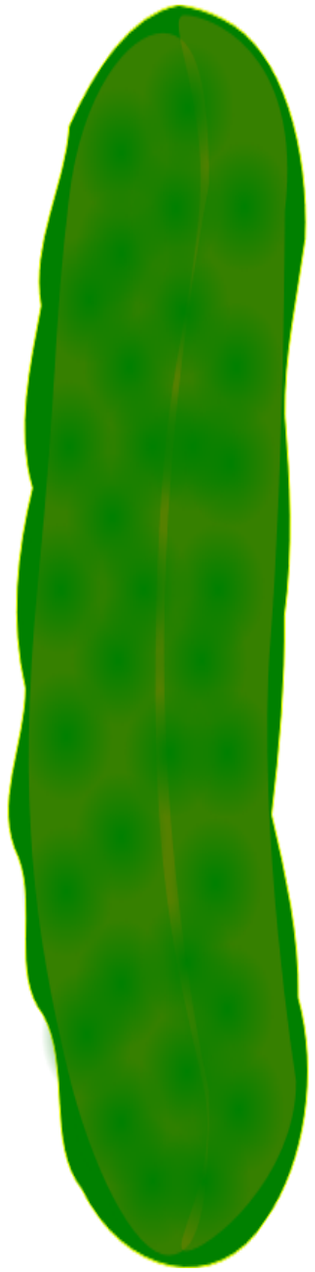

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A PECK OF PICKLED POEMS

By Jeff Callaway
Texas Outlaw Poet

Foreword

"Heartstrings Unveiled: A Poetic Overture to 'A Peck of Pickled Poems"

Hey, you, fellow traveler. Jeff Callaway here, inviting you to step into the tangled web of my teenage mind, a place where the seeds of poetry were first planted. As we embark on this literary journey, flipping through the pages of "A Peck of Pickled Poems," it's more than just a book; it's a peek into the rollercoaster of my adolescence, a ride that began back in 1991 when I was a 15-year-old troublemaker scribbling down the raw emotions that would become the heart of this collection.

Now, bear with me as I spill the beans on the origins of this poetic adventure. Picture it: 1991, a mix of awkward adolescence and the intoxicating allure of newfound passions. Armed with nothing but a pen, paper, and a truckload of teenage angst, I set out to make sense of the world. The result? "A Peck of Pickled Poems" – a concoction of emotions, stories, and revelations that brewed in the cauldron of my earliest writing endeavors. Yeah, it's the first-ever batch of poems and the book I ever wrote. Over the years, it's been fine-tuned, polished, and now, it's ready for you.

These poems are a true teenage anthem, capturing the ecstasy of first love, the heartbreak of new passions, and the stumbling introductions to the world of alcohol. It's the artsy

and flowy vibe of youth, a poetic melting pot that mirrors the wild mix of emotions that defined my youth.

As we delve deeper into the echoes of my teenage years, let's rewind the clock to 1991, a year etched in my memory as the genesis of this poetic adventure. The air was thick with the tunes of Nirvana, the scent of angst, and the promise of newfound freedoms. I was 15, a ball of contradictions, figuring out the maze of adolescence. The poems in this collection weren't crafted with the finesse of a seasoned poet but with the unbridled passion of a teenager untangling the threads of his emotions.

The ink flowed onto the pages, and I grappled with the whirlwind of first loves. The words became a refuge, a sanctuary where I could explore the exhilaration of infatuation, the ache of unrequited love, and the bittersweet beauty of fleeting moments. The emotions were raw, unfiltered, and laid bare for anyone willing to take a peek into the tumultuous landscape of my young heart.

Let's talk about the artistic flair woven into these verses. The collection dances on the edge of being artsy and flowy, painting vivid landscapes of emotion and experience. It's a mosaic of feelings, each poem a brushstroke on the canvas of my adolescence. There's a deliberate attempt to infuse a touch of nature, adding a layer of serenity to the chaotic narrative of youth.

Birds and bees take flight within these lines, their symbolic resonance adding depth to the storytelling. They're not just metaphors but companions in this poetic journey, fluttering through the verses like confidantes sharing the secrets of teenage passion and the urgency of young desire. It's a sensual

dance, an exploration of the intimate spaces where nature and emotion intertwine.

Now, let's zoom in on "Lost Maples." Picture three friends, wide-eyed and adventurous, setting up camp in the breathtaking Lost Maples State Nature Park. The crackling fire, the rustling leaves, and the shared laughter echo through the verses. It's a celebration of friendship and a communion with the natural world, a moment frozen in time within the pages of this collection.

And then, there's the crown jewel – "Nocturnal Emissions." The title itself is a bold declaration of intent. It's not just a poem; it's a declaration of youthful desire, a free verse exploration of sensuality that captures the essence of those late-night musings when the mind wanders into uncharted territories. It's both a nod to the physicality of teenage awakening and a testament to the power of poetry to navigate the unspoken.

As I reflect on these early works, it's evident that this collection isn't just a poetic debut; it's a visceral journey through the landscape of love and heartache in the early '90s. The ink on these pages is infused with the energy of a teenager grappling with the profound questions of identity, intimacy, and the inexorable march of time.

So, as you embark on this literary expedition through "A Peck of Pickled Poems," know that you're not just reading words; you're traversing the corridors of a 15-year-old's mind. Each line is a footprint left behind, a testament to the joy, pain, and unapologetic passion of adolescence. Enjoy the ride as we navigate the twists and turns of my formative years, where every poem is a snapshot of a moment when the heart beats louder than reason.

-Jeff Callaway
November 19, 2023

LAID

as now I lay
my pen to write
these words do fold
to ink the night
in ravishing hues of you
in colors true
lips red
face rouge
in my pockets and blues
I'm happy to see you
with a sword through my side and soul
and a fast train to D-town to die
I will consume these lies
and pretend that you love me
even though you despise me
you try to disguise me
you try to make me not want to be me
you just don't feed me
and in the end
I just want to be me
this poet
this man
this me
if only I could ever be
this man that I dream to be
all dreamed and clean
and on the scene
behind a silk screen
but still more brighter believe
me always effortlessly fallen asleep
awakening to my lazy dreams
and kicking this cling to me
and this perilous tideless sea
or this somehow always pyrite dream
full of all these haggish fiends

and the sting of those busy bees
to fade this flop with ease
and shake these knobby knees
like so many leaves
in the sun

MOVE

move this flesh
this soul at rest
this flesh unwed
this flesh utterly
yielding…

this flesh twice fed
and put to bed…

this weary worded unwinding of flesh…

this once or twice or thrice at best…

see me now at my best, so take me…

this binding of life and love
this leisure like hour
this school of thought
this principal of adhesion…

let’s soak it all in, let’s live deep from
within…

let’s become
let’s get some sun
all in good fun
accept me for who I am
catch my drift
catch me falling off a cliff
you are the reason that I exist
the flesh is the key…

the adamant Atlantic
to the west I say in purest form
purest form, nature

the unbounded sea all bounced
unbound these curling waves
with their tongue to the beach
in the kiss of the tide…

old moon rising and falling
all sad song said and done
all to where these words become
this love of flesh and bones and words
this love to you with heart like doves
to you for whom this heart does yearn
this love does seeketh thee…

and finds me and flies and moves me…

moves the waves, moves this unlimited sea
uninhibited moves me, moves these…

fractions of time in rhyme with the time
in eternity…

move this rhyme, rearrange these lines
it's the sign of the times and no I'm not fine
I'm moved…

NOCTURNAL EMISSIONS

my
alabaster princess
     of Atlantis prances
into oblivion
kissing me with her ocean
     and breathing in heavy animation
     a promenade
of sensual acumen, aplomb
     a parade
inside the lover's aquarium
where there is algebra in our footsteps
     and a masquerade
of opulent beauty
in the caress of her
fingertips
     all icy
     patterns on my bare skin
to the bone and so
     we drop the linen
in the kitchen
     towards an apex of explosions
     or a crushing weightlessness
     taking us towards our graves
or mine
     gravely
     in the grave diggers serenade
her tongue of waves of fire
     is like life is the alphabet of death
and her teeth are like tombstones
that spell out orgies
in her mouth
where I immerse myself
mercilessly
     in the rain her hair is also fire
orange and golden curls

that swirl
     secret side inside secret
swirl she is a cupcake
     in her creamy skin, an ivory
death wish bone China cabinet
and I am the rain
upon her sweaty bed
     with its no sheets, a bare bedlam
and I am the child she is torturing
in the dungeon
     with butterflies
nurturing tsunamis in my stomach
     as I reside within the walls
     of her
wet soft pinkness

POET'S LAMENT

these ghostly pages
have me now enslaved
to rave unraveling pages
to drunken to be laid
but all my debts pain
in full
I'm a bull
in a sort of China cabinet
and I know that it's not good
to be like this
with all of my precious life
now adrift
and bound by unchained bounds
a prisoner unto myself
punished by my loneliness
and fed by these empty fiends
all this bashfulness and scene
bled dry by wet dreams
too close together
to be unseen
this thing
this thing I call me
raped and drowned
to die
drug up on the beach

I DREAM'T I COULD FLY

last night
I dreamt a wonderful thing
I dreamt I was a king
leading these
pure soul beings
flying through these trees
and I was so high I could see the sea
like I wanted to be
in the deepest pools of my mind
where I thought I might find my
Christmas bright lights to shine
off the homes of battered millions
this giving season
I give you my heart
all ravished in its darkness
and in promises
of depth and serenity I
proceeded deeper down
into this
abyss
with just one kiss
I trusted myself on further down
as the storms did shake
and those winter winds did blow frowns
for the love I thought I'd found
but I was too late
like my heart was at stake
when I did dance and I did shake
vigorously herbs did shake
to dance
ambrosian scents
to cloud my romantic soul
with anesthesian trances of mysticism
listening to sentences in my head
as I held myself longer inside
with laughter and cries like
oceans of eyes
to beckon my arrival
I was like a beacon
when the trees did sway in my mind once again
and so I hid
myself behind their branches
with the sirens of the sun
and I dreamt
I could
fly

SPIRITUALIZED

and so now
I proclaim myself
an astral being
a spiritual presence
in form I am
a multi traveler of time
dimensions
realities
realms
worlds
planets
stars of consciousness
with all of this
eternal knowledge
and all of us
with all of these
fresh new discoveries
which leave me spiritualized
so that now I give my voice
back to the vertigo
from which it was forged
I cast aside my mind and soul
to the ongoing drama
behind the scenes of life
where we are all one
in the spirit world fold
and so come you of courage
oh come you of wisdom
come now you open minded free thinkers
you positive doers
you motivated movers
please give me the strength I need
to put to rest
that which shakes imagery before me

to long for only peace on this eve
filled with chaos
soul crashes
collateral damages Dow Jones
from the ashes I will rise Colossus
from the bowl of my holy soul
I will rise
when all I had to do was
die enlightened
spiritualized
in this waking life
lies an awakening dream
or swimming in the Cedar Creek
like in sun summer happiness
or dreaming
free children's foolish preschool dreams
that were not so foolish
with underlying themes of confusion
or picking through the illusions for the truth
sings the blues
and so give me no lies
so give me a girl with green eyes
forever for real and I will rise
to dream the new dream
to tell the new tale
to create new ideas
identities
idols

BEAT POEM

I was cold
I was broke
I was blue
I was afraid
to tell you
the truth.
I was beat
I was bled
I was dead
I was lost
in a sadness
of flesh.
I was not in my head
and not in my bed
and not in a state of mind
so blind instead
to only see red
and not to be led but to lead
or to find this too much a deed
and I never saw the sea
nor saw a see saw
nor sawed a block of wood
I got a wood
I come from the woods
I wooded would
if only me you'd fancy
if only you'd give me a chance, see
no, don't ask me
just eat me
my dirty poem
my greasy goosy root
my lump of words
oh word lump
oh shit of my head

you brain shit
my poetic excrement
iambic pentameter crap
in my lap
paper, pen
this here now
the end…
but oh not to be ended
this letter yet unsent
this everything I meant
this all of me
this whole of my intent
this advertisement
oh the sentiment
I'm an existential transient
a microscopic giant
my angelic element
these felonious hands
these larcenous lands
this utter less greed
that we all must feed
to be able to breathe
and keep your feet
up above all of it
independently buoyant
sophisticatedly exotic
my neurotic doll
my holocaustic tootsie roll
my endless gab and flub and flaw
my flipside
my dip back to the real
my kick back and chill
only feel
don't think
just feel…

on the edge of a teardrop
dripping off the mouth
of my fear…

GREAT & SECRET SHOW

I am not here
in this room
in this world
in this skin
I am not in
within sin
I am not lips
I am not the one
whose word is this
not intimate nor friend
nor wolves of flesh
wove we bound in
nor wombs to live
in one mouth of spirit
with no limits
no bounds
no names
no lanes
no rules to follow
no authority to swallow
my love nailed cross, sweet father
bleed deep through the needle
without fuel to feed
my gluttonous need for consumption
consumerism, mail fraud
in the mail room
behind the stacks of mail
all of these endless tales
up spun and spun up
through these starving veins of mine
hungry for the fix
and the prick of a needle…
B.P.’s old man lives in San Fran…
atomic brainstorms, an anatomic demoralization
an end to fit a means to an end

woe but the hand of a friend
the heavenly presence of hope
bound in lies, surrounded in eyes
frankincense and myrrh
balanced on the wings of a word
by a dove, the fly of my endless woe
these oats I have sewn
my Adamic flesh, etched in stone
beat against the bone
only to be left alone
in this room
with these lonely, blank pages
singing, drinking with sage wages
onto these pages, I'm mean
I'm unrepentant
I'm unclean
I'm obscene
I'm a fiend
I'm between
bewitched and behind
and be free
I'm not free
I won't be
I won't breathe
I unbelong
in unbelief
unrest, unrelief
uneverything, un-me
nor no me
no more me
no alimony
oh poor Joe Maloney
been talking too much on the phony
the only, lonely
one who bone me
befriend me

behind me
no more me…

we come for you
all of us to you
all wrapped up in you
I will not bleed me through you
I'm through, all through
won't be impure
nor untrue
nor you

SECRET ROOM

when
I'm inside
the room inside
my head
the room in which I lay my head
upon its creative hotbed
where wild words
through the walls of my brain are bled
and I can say all that need be said
and all the weight of the world is shed
inside
the room inside
my fountain head
where all my pickled poems are fed
the soul food
of pleasure and leisure unmeasured
where I glory my creations
to forever
like my frontal lobe is like
a library of letters
of love and sex and death and leather
is literally what my literary laboratory means
with a million astral projection screens
I can become my only everything
that I want to be
and I can teach
my poetry in lethal lessons
and leave a little room left for perception
of dreamy answers to life's burning questions
just follow my lyrical processions
of rhyme it's just a mark of my profession
I just let truth and wisdom set me free
and I let my dreams take over my realities and
I want to be what I want to be I

want to see the sea too see
in my secret room
through my secret windows
let me see like locust pin wheels
all moving movie reel real
like how my mental cinema must feel
if my words were pickles
they'd be DILLS
for real
and I'd be fed
inside the room inside
my mountain head
tuned in to astral television sets
placing bets
on the poetry apocalypse pirouette
parade and beauty pageant minuet
so let's dance!
the sock hop of my medulla oblongata
is a burlesque
or like a magazine full of meanings
to drift me in and out of my being
I mean what I'm saying
I can't believe what I'm seeing
but I'll say what I've seen
in
my millennium of moment's midnight meditation
dream
and there is a blank space
in my head
that must be fed
and I'd rather be wed to words
than be dead
inside
the room inside
my head inside my
secret room

NOTHING TO DO BLUES

as spontaneous words
curdle the cow's udder
and my mind like mud
slides to hide boredom
under this bored façade
I'm coming out of this closet
simply to say
that everyday
is a death of myself
and that all of this constant march
is constantly creeping through
this house of guilt
this masque of tears
this brothel of bored turds
in the world's punchbowl
and the squirrel
who is bored of the nut
is tired of this always cracking
devouring time
only to be hungry
tomorrow
today
hungry for death
or maybe just searching for something
something less common than
busting a nut
and always being in this rut but
end this always now
end this endless
fiend for action
friend of time
and in my eyes I'm
only deathless
my words not dead and buried
living in this life like six feet under
and drowned in time and rhyme
and this so much
nothing to do blues

ODE TO JOAN

my Joan of Arc
all white gown enshrouded
endowed with true eyes and spirit
you pierce the girth of my soul
you true saint
with a kiss of a goddess
you who had never stolen
but only my heart
which you now own
you in bone
only these bones uncloned
purer than skies
more beautiful than nights
unto a neighbor thou never lie
nor covet thy neighbor's ass
your ox does not work on the Sabbath
you keep me holy better angel
blessed with breasts and breath blessed
I bleed for you
you gleam so true
I dream of you
only in solid beams
the light shines
my pants now cream
see me hide where the sun don't shine
me get you hard from behind
inclined me eat you true

trust and forms unfurling
you light up my sky
you are the best buy
you are why
I don't die
you holy star

with your feet propped up on the bar
I love you like a roar
I lick your core
save my soul
I'm bored

LOST MAPLES

north
of Vanderpool
upon the Sabinal River
with varicolored trees
on rolling hills
which Mother Nature does deliver
in Autumn
a most majestic Texas sight
deep in the heart of
Lost Maples
we three friends
did camp one
night…

just Bryan, Josh and I…

sometime
shortly thereafter sunrise
in a beautiful birth of first light
we arrived
a wondrous wedding of friends
to nature's sweet delight
we set out on a five mile hike
out to our most quaint campsite
upon the shores
of a clear and meandering stream
which the earth did feed
from the womb
of its natural spring
from atop a mighty limestone peak
my brave Bryan did dive
into its cool
refreshing
deep…

ancient
tall tall trees
live among the splendor
of the leaves
yellow, brown and green
Uvalde Bigtooth Maples dream
dramatic scenery
the Green Kingfisher sings
the song that late October brings
to echo against those rocky peaks
where Golden-Cheeked Warblers
nest and feed in Spring
to awaken the great Gray Fox that sleeps
the White-Tailed Deer
the bobcats screech
javalinas, armadillos, raccoons root free
with all the flora and fauna
who both live together in peace
in nature's sweet sweet
simplicity…

and then
a lonesome
wind did speak
to Bryan, Josh and me
a breeze that blew bitter
bittersweet
up above and beyond
a canopy of trees
and those scenic streams
the sunlight beams
off clearest creeks
beside the deepest variations
of steep and rugged limestone canyons
we finally stood atop a grey plateau grassland
to admire
a limitless landscape of endless
wooded slopes

that sat softly radiant
in evening's pink
afterglow…

and also
archaeological
evidence does show
that prehistoric peoples
once did roam those
rolling hills that rolled and roll
from a horizon of black gold
to distances unknown
my friend Josh was even told
Apaches and Comanches
in days of old
both brave and bold did pose
a most menacing threat to those
settlers they met
who stole their homes
if truth be told
and truth be known
Josh told me so
by the campfire's warmest glow
by the campfire's wildest light
later that night
we both agreed that it wasn't right
but that Lost Maples was quite a sight
so while in hammock Bryan slept tight
right within the confines
of our quiet
and quaint campsite
as Josh and I both drank
we came alive
alive we cried
under that wide open starry sky
of Texas night…

just Bryan, Josh and I…

A FOREST

our love
it was a forest
baptized
in darkness of night
she was a huntress with amethyst eyes
and I
was a mockingbird in flight
drinking mai-tai's
when what we had just felt so right
like silent moments or only breathing noises
shared between her and I
and all the evanescence of those times
in her Big Thicket's wilds
those games
we once played twice in one night
like hide and go seek
or delicious disguise
or we were learning to ride
a bike in her bed
was quite nice
while the tar sky
inked dark and old and bold
and bright was her ceiling
inside her
bedroom of the night
it was like
some psychedelic black light
and besides
the grass was crushed emerald glass
(or carpet)
and the pine trees were alive
alive alive walls
with leaves of hunter green
or lemon
or lime

that time the moon was a golf ball of twine
as “fore” I cried
I swung my nine iron wide
awake in America I
crossed her continental divide
where it was warm inside
and I smiled
like a big dumb child
with orchids for eyes
closed clinched tight
dreaming a world of pleasure
inside her animal eyes
inside her porcelain thighs
her breasts
my powdered milk delight
and like I said
what we had just felt so right
those wet explosions inside
a forest
of the night

NAOMI

I’d give you my world
if you’d just kiss me right now
like a lover you’ve known
for so long
how my fingers wander
makes you wonder
how I always seem to see
the image of an ocean in your eyes
and the river that runs through it
a thin disguise to your heart
and so I guess what I’m trying to say
is…

I’ve loved you from the start…

so kiss me naked
and poised like fine art
and run away with me
and my heart
to San Francisco in Spring
to live with me
and to be so free
in a two story white adobe
with a little white picket fence
and we’ll rinse our brand new Hondas
with spot free rinse and glint
and we’ll grow like weeds
oh why can’t you see
that you need me indeed
and I dream
of you and me in the gold and orange sun
or in the tub scrubbing up
our skin could be so much fun
coming out
so fresh and so clean

so early in Spring
with your flowers so bare
and opening up
and blossoming
and I think you must be
some kind of angel with wings to me
and so with these wings
fly inside of me
and cast aside all of your doubt
to indulge
in the pleasure of
my wet lips…

kiss me again
and tilt your head
a little to the side
this time it's almost one
and I promised you'd see the sun
and also breakfast…

poems
about your lips and
poems
about your hips and
poems
about your thighs
poems
about your eyes and
poems
in your eyes…

poems
that please and pun
poems
that are fun to someone
poems
that have gotten us nowhere
'til now and this
kiss…

and so
please stop leaving
and like me
or lick me with love
like little doves
from your mouth
or your mouth
your mouth…

I'd wait for a month
just to hear your voice…

I'd die in the dark and rejoice…

I promise
I won't make no noise
if you'll just sleep here
beside me tonight
it's so cold
so we'll just cuddle
for warmth
okay?

TO: JOHN FOGERTY

the crickets chirp
an old Creedence tune
like Bad Moon-
Rising or Born On The Bayou
the water moccasins sing too
through
poison devil tongues
of Satan's tooth
to
hiss the song right on through
their mouths agape and cotton fanged
the moonlight serenade
alligators and crocodiles promenade
to Have You Ever Seen The Rain
their ivory wide smiles for miles
seem to say
yes
to the bullfrogs bopping
the slimy toads hopping
this Green River is never stopping
with snapping turtles surfing
on logs meant for the chopping
so just Keep On Chooglin'
up to the big Bad Moon
Rising
above John Fogerty's phantasy zoo
where his creatures in Mississippi mud
sing the blues
in the breeze
just cause
I saw it on TV
the footprints of the Boggy Creek
monster
mad in marshy marmalade mud

this Blue Moon Swamp is a musical masterpiece
to flood
the silhouettes of cypress trees
as the dark shadows bud
and bloom
to the lead guitar grooves
and the lead singer's croons soothe too
his music sets the mood
while lily pads float soliloquies to
the rowdy river
that mirrors
the mystical sky in deep blue
to ooby dooby ooby dooby ooby dooby too
like Willie and The Poorboys do
when the marshmallow clouds thunder and boom
and rain down on birds of prey
but the whooping crane plays
like my ding a ling shakes like a big
rattlesnake
and he smiles
with a catfish in his slender throat
and a hungry deathwish hope
as the great horned owl
watches all suspicious eyed
hoot hoot hooting

ASTRAL WEDDING FUNERAL

I left my flesh
and I left my bones so far away
so far behind
myself
stuck straight
facing up as I lay
in my space and time
at my own pace
I did find
a spirit world right inside me
I'm an astral being
and besides my soul I'm speeding
past what's left behind
through time and space
on through the evening
till my brain began bleeding
and so I left myself behind
as I lay dying
sleeping
dreaming
but at first I went kicking and screaming
streaming feelings
my mind let reeling
round like a world on its axis
lifting like unleavened bread
glued to the ceiling

astral world sight seeing
I was really leaving

the world that I knew
I left behind

and for the very first time

I walked the line into the light
of my mind's eye
I once was blind
but now I see
the unseen

feeling free like a poet I fell from a dream
so fresh and so clean
as I step on to great golden beams
of light
it seems like I float right
from one to the next
freely
with frightening feelings

DAY 1

from day one
it's you
against The Man
all with a grain of salt
and peanuts in your hands
and your courage
and your convictions
and all your fool's mistakes
it seems like you were destined
to fail
ever since you were
a babe
but babe cease not
and forever not
now be
the kind of man
who turns pillars to salt
and parts the wildest seas
but cease not
now be
of the blood of life
live now
to drink
drink deep
but drink bold
and to your own
strong soul be true
bend not
at these futile words
that so forever fold
and bold blow
and sing your own tune
and go here
and go there

go your own way
you have the right
to choose
just don't be painted blue
paint yourself
every color that is you
be undaunted
to your own self
be true
be cool
be you

just like I do

THE NIGHT

the mystery of the night
the caress and embrace of the night
the night sky and its deep darkness
the puzzle pieced fragments of the night
the opening and closing of the legs
of the night
and the puffy clouds of the night
that billow out softer than
my pillow tonight
and in the night
and the night within
and bringing out the night
to stretch
to prolong
to illuminate the night
to somehow sense a sacredness
in the night
in the privacy of night
in the night sweats
in the amorous sensuous
seething bitterness
in the cool tensing
and releasing
and on the edge
you pitter patter steps of night
please spring forth please
children of light
night cleansing
night purging
night regurgitating
sloppy drops
of night

SUNRISE POEM

we are all alone here
we do not know this place
we are lost
we are mad children
not knowing
the meaning of words
unlearned to us
but not free form
flowing forms of madness
words
unfurled and still
unknown to both of us
but real
and still more truer still
than ill
or even a breath
or even just a kind word
to you
none the less
I'm something special
you can take home with you
undressed
I'm naked, shaved
I'm all clean
I'm like a new baby
out in the light
my shiny iridescent dream
like belief
for someone who
could not conceive
of belief
or dream to ever be
someone's queen bee
or king of this
brave new world

and with words wield this love sword
like a welder all woven
in green shades
of plenty pockets please
this please this
desirous need
for uncertainty
like steel dim obedience
and blinding light
and how light can play
out this scheme
and what it all means
and what it all means
and how all of this
all of this words
and nothingness
and birds
can only lead to
sex
and flying
or staring at everything
with a pen in your hand
at sunrise

SHE

she
sat there in the smoky room
where the poets loomed in the gloom
and the coffee brewed
as time seemed to
stand still
I knew that she was real
or that she was like
a wonderful white rose
just waiting to bloom
in Spring
or even right there in front of me
where I noticed how her bones caught
shadows of light
from beneath her skin
that I wanted to be inside
and soon
I longed to touch her
with my long velvet tongue
my hands
calloused and wet
with words
with ink there of
that burned
into the page that was her
with long blonde tresses
and spectacles
all spectacular she
was just like she was
the moon
that I could feel her
pull like I was the ocean
my swoon and my sway
as she sat there silently
scrawling romantic electric words

with her doll like hands
creamy and ceramic
into her black leather notebook
where she kept her poems and things
she seemed just like a cat
with her litters of light
as I took the stage
to read
I watched for her responses
to each
of my bombastic elastic words
that I bombarded
upon her ear lobes
until she became shellshocked
and pulled her kites, her eyes
from the page
to glance up at me
with her eyes
her eyes like lights
that shown up on the stage
where I stood lonely
and longed for her to join me there
but she just smiled

SHE BANGS THE DRUM

with a savvy
sense of style
that can turn heads
for miles
and make you want to
walk on the wild side
if you were worth her while
she has the most amazing
girl of your dreams
azure eyes
to gleam
as if glitter cities might seem
to be free
in some inner peace
to breed
her soul’s majestic light
is beams
to light up your life
if you had a life to light
like the sun could light up the sky
if you could be the moon
on any given Tuesday night
you would find her there
as the poets arrive
with the most gorgeous smile
and her drum by her side
and everyone else beside themselves
she makes my heart just melt
the ice in my blood
when she tells me that
poetry karaoke is fun
and that that
is why
she has come
to bang her

drum

NIGHT OWL

and so now I know
I can always catch that
night owl
back home from downtown
when I'm 2am broken and haggard
from a bender or a foul
and I've always gotten home
safe and sound
from Sixth Street
when it's so late and so loud
and in the liquor
I've almost drowned
but I guess I've always been
a night owl
ever since I was five years old
and I set free my caffeinated soul
and awoke every morning to a hot cup a joe
with lots of sugar
lots of cream
in my cream of wheat
TV malt o meal mornings
of before school early mornings
with Mommy
the Three Stooges
with Bugs Bunny
I'm all full of coffee
because even as a kid
I'd spend all night long rocking
and so I needed that extra boost
to get my schoolwork up off me
but it was nothing like it is now
as a girlfriend starts another pot of coffee
and I smoked forty seven cigarettes yesterday
and the coffee pot hoots
like a Benzedrine train whistle

and I’m just another poet
in this Austin, Texas
is a zoo
and I’m Bonsai Buckeroo
hoot hoot hoot
through every coffee shop on Guadalup’
plus Ruta Maya’s even open til two
and there really is nothing
like coffee after a night of cold brews
and a pack of Marlboros too
as my head it just soothes
in such smooth
buzzing blissful toffee
man what can I say
I mean I really love coffee
so get off me

THE BODY PAINTING CEREMONY

we listen
like thieves
to the beginning
to the end
as the body
painting ceremony
begins
with my sensual
sexy special surprise
and all for my favorite baby
on her twenty first birthday night
when we both get undressed
but we both don’t hide
where the sun don’t shine
you can see us just fine
as she unwrapping and unopening
this present of romantic bliss
and this recklessness
is seething heaven
for just her and I
and our rhythmic blessings
pressed tight with our bare thighs
and our magnetized lovers eyes
to rub a dub in the tub
wet hot
my spa is ka
by candlelight
with the foreplay
and the drip dry
has her new adventures in hi fi
and our hearts all hurly-burly
with our lips all wet with lingual kisses

as she closes her eyes
to make birthday wishes
she is both my masterpiece
and my apprentice
as she answers my body painting advances
her flesh is my canvas
and I've covered the bed in plastic
and my mattress
is graph paper
for the geometry of our love making
elliptical
slivers of silver
metallic paint to radiate
upon her flanks
her sweet meat flesh
to break the bank
under the mesh
of bleached pubic regions
as I color all four of her seasons
on all fours
when I'm on the floor
her belly is a bowl of apples and oranges
when I daub on a crown of thorns on the arms
of my Chloe dancer paramour
and then I adorn
upon one tiny foot
a forlorn Van Gogh
and on the other a piece of a poem by Poe
that reads quothe the raven nevermore
and my body painting kit is a big hit
yeah it's a righteous score
that I bought in the Fort Worth bookstore
where four leap clovers upon each of her toes
were born
to bring good luck to her luxurious form
an electrical symmetry
to our eclectics chemistry
is painted flames to keep her warm
and to keep our love life

oh so bright
like a red candle to burn
all through the night
while the green grass drips high
on the floor
where the yellow rose of Texas
dreams more rainbow scenes
to turn over the paintings
that are not what they seem
but only naked scenery
as my fingers
begin increasing these
fingerpainting dreams
as I paint on
colored strokes
upon my lovers skin
in tribal patterns
meditation
Zen

TO: DALE EARNHARDT JR.

speed kills
but Dale Earnhardt Jr.
does it for thrills
and he does it on all four wheels
with balls of steel
he goes through all five gears
as his tires squeal
into turn two he steers
and the rubber he peels
reads Goodyear
but the car that he drives says
Budweiser is the King of Beers
as he faces 500 laps with
no fear
the power of 800 horses
wrings competitors tears
and adds one more win
to his fabulous career
cause he's a champion
chasing the cup
to the sound of the crowds cheers
but all 8 pistons firing
is all that he can hear
lap after lap
until the checkered flag appears
or Daytona burns
cause he's got some points
that he's got to earn
and all the other racecar drivers
got a lesson to learn
from Dale
and all of his fans
got different stories to tell
about how number 8
drives like a bat out of hell
in a red Chevrolet
and you can ask
any of the drivers
and I'm sure they'd say
that when the green flag goes up
Dale Earnhardt Jr.'s racing to win
the Nextel Cup

JUNEBRIDE

she was hotter
than a June bride
on the fourth of July
and I knew I just had to
make her mine
if only for one night
if only for the rest of our lives
she said to me that it'd be alright
if I came with her to her house that night
and so I bought her a beer
and then I booked us a flight
to some place called Astoria
to some place where she could cool off
she said her name was Gloria
and I said that that was fine
and we had such a good time
as we drank bottles of wine
and she read my mind
and my new chapbook
as she put on ChapStick
as she licked her lips
and then she lit
us both another cigarette
and then she lit an incense stick
she was about to light herself on fire
and I was inspired
I danced on the wire
my face licked the fire
and I lapped up the last of my supper
I introduced her to my mother
she became one of my greatest lovers
and my latest flame
as she spoke my name
and then burst into flames

late one June day

PEARL

so far away
I could never touch you
but only dream of being yours
caressing skinny shoulders
and kissing skinny neck
holding
and embracing
such a young pearl
holding you tight with my
muscle
giving you shelter
in my shell
I'm clenching tight
to keep you
out of the hands of others
and with pleads of once again
to feel your body
up above me
kissing me
with experience on your lips
and changing my world
with your
deep blue eyes

LONELY GIRL

lonely girl
with beautiful lips
her sleepy eyes, dreamy
these incandescent incantations
limiting my ability
to see things clearly
beyond her years
sweeter words
that only her lips have heard
sincere moments of her breathing
sleeping hands
restless at her feet
with angel's wings
and words that burn
the fore thought of forgotten emotions
falling unheard
and so without asking her
if I could kiss her
she said yes
and she showed to me
what heaven really could be
or that it did
really exist
once my lips touched hers
pillow skin lips
that touched me with sugary heaven
and spoke of words
words with language that danced
like a dancer
cotton eyed joe my soul
she spoke to me
in whispers
tiny kisses
my hands on her thigh
as she awoke

still
bathed in beauty
her lips
still
shimmering
dancing

INSOMNIAC

I just can’t sleep
with you beside me
you leave me hot and bothered
and burning
for love
at night
sweating against you again
sighing
your perspiration
my body slides against yours
my hands resting flat
on the backs of your thighs
my hands gliding
my hands
never resting
but counting the sheep
and counting your blinks as you sleep
and you dream beneath me
the beauty that lies
beneath the lids of your eyes
as I pull your hair back
behind your ear
I tenderly kiss your neck
as I listened to the rhythms
of your breathing
and the beat of your heart beating
but still awake
my heart at your feet
as I wait for you to open your eyes
I just can’t sleep
with you by my side
and so just take me in
like a wet stranger
take me in
to the moonlight of your

warm and crazy home
and on my body rest your bones
making me breathe like worthless merchants
in the valley of the dolls
walls holding moaning our oneness
in the morning
all of these
new breaths like newness
that's falling like dew onto
the mouth of love
this yearning to learn your oneness
and make it my own
make it something of bones
clay twigs and mold
it's my fort
it's something that cannot be sold
something that is yours alone
that cannot be shown
but only be known
now that you're grown
and you're out there
in the void
all alone
in this darkness
they call heaven
it still can be
so cold
down here in Texas
with all of this
heart
to roam

ROSE GENTIANS

the color purple
     in mosaic shades
          of
rhetorical explosions
     onto a page
          grape grenades to grace
with such floral royalty
     they animate
          like raspberry ironies
my ivory blank
     canvas erupts a
          plum page
the petals swirling in lavender
     articulate
          like box fan blades
circulate
     around their lemony centers
          the yellow antennas to splinter
rose gentians in Spring
     making me remember
          everything
in all my lilac daydreams
     deliver me
          gold is nature's first green
with its livid imagery
     these purple passages sing
          the pollination of
a bumble bee

BLUEBONNET SONNETS

1.

In fields encircled by the barbed embrace,

Where cattle graze, and longhorns take repose,

Bluebonnets bloom 'midst verdant, wind-touched grace,

Spring's wild dance, as untamed as legend goes.

A palette of untamed hues unfurls,

Blue bullets shot toward the golden sun,

Texan children in wildflower swirls,

Spring's bloom, a lively, love-fueled run.

Electric heaven bathes in azure light,

Quieting herds, enhancing the daylight's play,

As artists lift the dimness from the night,

Or poets find bright words that gently sway.

In Texas' bosom, flowers boldly sing,

As soaring verses, mockingbirds take wing.

2.

In fields enclosed by barbed wire's firm embrace,
Longhorns recline midst green and blue's expanse,
Untrimmed grass sways to Spring's gentle grace,
Wild as tales told by gunslingers, askance.

Blue bullets fired from the sun's own gun,
Texas' ornery blooms dance in full bloom,
New blossoms akin to love, Spring has spun,
Enfolding me within their fragrant plume.

Electric heavens in blue hue alight,
Cows hush in awe as day's accents adorn,
As painters bring to life a muted light,
Or poets craft bright words from thoughts unborn.

In Texas, blooms as bright as fiery verbs,
Flying like poems sung by mockingbirds.

3.

Barbed wire to keep the cows inside the field
Lounging longhorns in bluebonnets and green
Un-cut grass that the wind in Spring does wield
Even wilder than gunslingers have seen
Blue bullets shot from a gun to the sun
Ornery children of Texas in bloom
New blooms can be like love Spring is fun
Nestling me drunk inside their soft loom
Electric heaven in blue was this sight
To quiet the cows and accent the day

Like a painter can un dim a vague light
Or poets can find the bright words to say

Very bright Texas flowers love bold words
Even flying poems like mockingbirds

TEXAS HAIKUS

in Texas night
lone star lovers with mad moon
romance bluebonnets

empty beer bottles
shine in hot light round here
in Texas Summer

azure sky opens
to the call of a Yellow Lotus
rain dance

my buxom Texas
lover in blue stockings
bares her soul's lone star

drunk Dallas, Texas
nights in Deep Ellum I love
burgers bars live bands

but Lone Star beer
support local drunkenness
and Texans spirit

here in Texas town
drunk watching the news
talk of Texas casinos

howdy y'all
burlesque barbecue party tonight
ten kegs and girls

Cholla Cactus blooms pink
lavender clouds sink deep
into the Big Bend

on both sides of the Red
Indian Paintbrush and Bluebonnets
dance hand in hand

Rose Gentians in Spring
make purple love to my green
backyard in Austin, Texas
and it rained today
East Texas mushrooms in cow patties
of Texas growing

please support the Bill
medical marijuana in Texas
today

thousands of men
in prison for smoking joints
yet sleep next to killers

my Deep Ellum bliss
is when Reverend Horton Heat sings
at Trees rockabilly chicks

music capitol
Austin, Texas guitars wine
and cry a song for Stevie Ray

with all of my heart
remember the Alamo
Goliad and God

the red mountains sacrifice
their stone souls up
to a Cap Rock Canyon sky

Slender Stem Bitterweed
contrasts the cloudy deep grey
Palo Duro Canyon sky

and Texas is my home
my hearts own square acre to roam
my life, love, Texas

THE HONEYCOMB

drunk again
the swim of words
in the lush
and the thrust of lust
before a rise tidal waves
over us
and the age of Aquarius
is upon us
and it feels as if so
that these words should
be free
and that they should fly
and soar high
up above us
and even though
my head it's spinning
and it feels as if so
that I feel
or even bolder
that I see
the queen bee
hiding in her honeycomb.

and you were there
in the gloaming
beside the honey bee tree
beside the measureless sea
that brings in the slosh of the waves
that lie where two lovers meet
to become true
blood brothers and sisters
through the scabs
of bumble bee
stings.

SURF SONG

I wish I could surf.
I want to ride the crest
of the bluest wave
the sea will be me
brother
oh surf would me save
oh see me out
on the endless sea
only the waves
my surfboard
and me.
I come in with the tide.
I wash up on shore.
I stand on the beach
with my surfboard.
the ocean and I
as one My Lord.
I shake my curly blonde locks
in the wind
all wet with
the stuff of the sea
within.
if you didn't look too close
you'd think I had fins.

TV BABY

my mommy is a television
my daddy is a stereo
I get my morals and values
from sitcoms and talk shows
I'm robbing and raping
isn't that what I should do?
I'm killing and stealing
all I want is to be cool
no one loves me
I love no one in return
I get my respect
and my revenge
with my machine gun
I take a drink
and I take a pill
and I kill
and I soak up the blood
with dollar bills

LAST BUS ON EARTH

in this night of dreams
with these beat wings
with these bruised moods
all these leaded woes
filled of fatal foes
fed of fatal land
just a slide of hand
nothing up my sleeve
nothing inside me
nothing can save me
I feel like I'm beat down blue
I don't know what I should do
I got to get a plan
become a man
I got to get it while I can
I got to give it to you
I got to promise for you
that I'll always love you true
and give it to you deep, wet
I'll give it to you correct
I'll give it to you, my life
I want to make you my wife
I want to make all of these dreams
and I want to touch you it seems
I want to love you
I want to be with you
eternal in heaven true
pre death me saint naked you
shrouded together
cloaked in night in you
together forever
wrapped in each other
lovers…
I feel like

I've reached the end of the line
the bottom of the stack
the last bus
I feel like I'm searching
accumulating direction
motivating to move
to do, to create
to be somebody in all of this
here and now and whose who
and to find the me
that can be free with you
I'm trying to get a clue
I'm trying to find something to do
I'm trying to be comfortable in blue
I'm trying to find you
my love it is you
I have found my you
it's you
I've found truth
my youth
I'm blue…
the sun is rising
in Shreveport, Louisiana
the birds are chirping
I'm waiting for the last bus on earth
I'm missing the girl I love back home
I'm a lonesome traveler
in a moronic insane Greyhound night
I'm broke and tired
I'm withdrawing
I'm unwinding
I'm down wind
I'm away
but it's a new day
and I must go away
I've got to find myself
got to find my way
back to you
back to you

but today I'm so blue.
and the blues
is my truth

Afterword

Echoes of Adolescence – Navigating the Cosmic and Chaotic Beauty of 'A Peck of Pickled Poems”

Alright, my fellow wanderer through the poetic realms, let's sit down for a moment and have a chat. You've just journeyed through the landscape of "A Peck of Pickled Poems," and I'm here, Jeff Callaway, to share a few reflections, revelations, and perhaps a few chuckles.

First things first, let me say a heartfelt thank you. Thank you for embarking on this literary escapade with me, flipping through the pages where the ink holds the echoes of my teenage self. Whether you found yourself immersed in the ecstasy of first loves, lost in the melancholy of heartbreak, or chuckling at the antics of a 15-year-old troublemaker, I'm grateful for your company.

Now, let's talk about "Spiritualized." Ah, that poem. It's like a cosmic voyage, a spacey journey into the depths of introspection and enlightenment. As I penned those verses, I felt like a stargazer, reaching for galaxies beyond the grasp of my teenage hands. It's a piece that transcends the earthly bonds, inviting you to look beyond the mundane and contemplate the vastness of existence. I hope it resonated with you, perhaps sparking a moment of cosmic contemplation.

As you navigated through the poems, you might have encountered the ebb and flow of emotions, the juxtaposition of vulnerability and sensuality, and the vivid imagery painted with the brushstrokes of a young heart. It's a mosaic of experiences, a snapshot of a particular moment in time when I was still figuring out the puzzle of selfhood and love.

Speaking of love, did you find yourself nodding along to the teenage anthem of first love and new passions? Ah, the heady cocktail of emotions, the highs and lows, the intoxicating allure of romance. I hope those poems stirred a familiar resonance, whether you were transported back to your own teenage years or whether you observed the chaotic beauty of adolescence from a safe distance.

Now, let's address the naturey, artsy, and flowy elements woven into the tapestry of these verses. Birds, bees, and the serene beauty of Lost Maples State Nature Park—they're not just embellishments but threads that tie the collection together. Nature became a silent companion in the journey of these poems, grounding the tumultuous emotions in the tangible beauty of the world around us.

"Lost Maples," that camping trip with three buddies, is a personal favorite. I hope you could almost smell the crackling campfire, feel the camaraderie of friends, and sense the wonder of nature seeping through the verses. It's a celebration of friendship, an ode to the simple joys of being young and carefree in the embrace of the great outdoors.

And then, of course, there's the provocatively titled "Nocturnal Emissions." Did you find yourself blushing, chuckling, or perhaps both? It's the kind of poem that doesn't shy away from the physicality of teenage awakening. I hope it brought a mix of nostalgia and amusement, a reminder that adolescence is a peculiar dance of innocence and burgeoning desires.

Now, as you close the book, I want to express a hope—a hope that you enjoyed this glimpse into the mind of an adolescent poet. Was it a bit like stumbling into a nostalgic, messy teenage bedroom? I certainly hope it wasn't too terrifying, but rather, a reminder that the journey through adolescence is a messy, beautiful, and often hilarious ride.

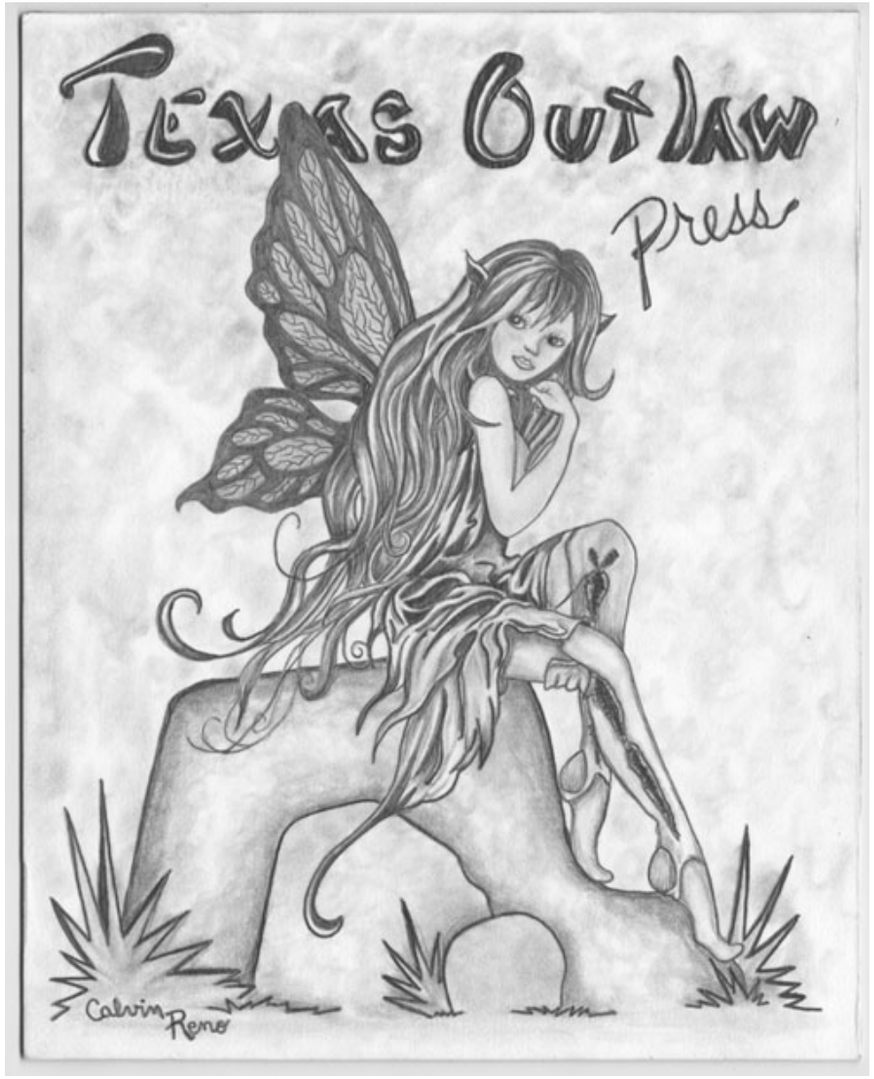
As I reflect on these poems and the path that led me to pen them, I'm reminded of the power of poetry to serve as a time capsule. These verses are snapshots of a moment, frozen in the ink-stained pages, capturing the essence of a 15-year-old dreamer grappling with the complexities of life, love, and self-discovery.

So, thank you, dear reader, for joining me on this poetic expedition. I hope the poems resonated with you, stirred something within, and maybe even prompted a chuckle or two. As you step away from "A Peck of Pickled Poems," I hope you carry with you a bit of the teenage spirit, a touch of the chaotic beauty that defines the journey from youth to adulthood.

Until our paths cross again in the world of words, may you find joy in the messy, beautiful dance of life, and may the echoes of these poems linger in the chambers of your own heart.

-Jeff Callaway
November 19, 2023

Jeff Callaway or Jeffrey Donald Callaway, also known as the Texas Outlaw Poet, is the LPTexas **Candidate for US Congressional District 1 in the 2018 election. Texas Outlaw Poet is how he is known largely throughout the Texas Spoken Word scene. He is a co-founder and owner of** Texas Outlaw Press **and was born in Athens, Texas in 1976. Since then he has attempted to tour every bar and every jail-house in the great state. Fortunately he shares his experiences through his edgy southern poetry that can be as sultry as Texas itself. Jeff has written five chapbooks and two full-length volumes, all published by Austin publisher Texas Outlaw Press. He has appeared at countless open mics and performed many spoken word events since 2003. He recently had his first art show of original work at the Hal Samples Space Gallery in Deep Ellum, displaying his many multi-media renderings of beer bottles. He currently resides in Gun Barrel City, Texas where he continues to perform, write, paint, live and love.**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